

X
23.9.38.
1609/569.
CHRIST
THE
LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

A
SERMON,

PREACHED BEFORE
THE SYNOD OF GLASGOW AND AYR,
AT GLASGOW,
APRIL 9th, 1776.

To which are subjoined,
AN EXHORTATION TO FAMILIES IN COURSE
OF VISITATION,
AND A SHORT EXPLANATION OF THE ORDINANCE
OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

BY
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MINISTER AT LESMAHAGOW.

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ALONG with the Synod sermon, there is advice to families in course of visitation; if necessary or useful then, as they may be forgot, or not well remembered, this method will remedy that defect. As I would wish to be active and useful to introduce a New Testament psalmody into public worship, and though I am destitute of poetical talents, to contribute in that way, I shall be happy, if what is said shall tend to remove prejudices from the minds of the Christian people, and facilitate so necessary an improvement in our devotion.

It is hoped opposition (if there is any) will consider, that if they confine themselves only to the Psalms of David, that we should have organs, timbrels, &c. with all the other instruments. Do they charge us with adding to the word of God, and the consequent threatnings? Let them reflect, that the threatnings are full as strong against those that diminish, or take away from it.

For the sake of communicants, particularly young persons, there is published a plain and simple explanation of the nature of the ordinance of the Supper, and that temper of mind Christians should be possessed of when they engage in that service, that they may do it so as to be accepted in the sight of God, and with benefit to themselves.

As soon as the 10th of June 1868
I was to receive a letter from
you for which I am very
much obliged. I have not
yet received it. I shall
try to get it as soon as
possible. I am very
kindly yours
J. H. P.



I have not yet received
your letter of the 10th of
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LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

JOHN VIII. 12.

I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD; HE THAT FOLLOWETH ME, SHALL NOT WALK IN DARKNESS, BUT SHALL HAVE THE LIGHT OF LIFE.

WITH the greatest elegance and propriety, scripture uses the metaphors of light and darkness, for knowledge and ignorance, happiness and misery.

Hence, ancient prophets describe the Messias as the light of the Gentiles, the Sun of righteousness to the moral world. John the Baptist candidly confesses, 'that he was not that light, but that he came to bear witness of the true light.'

Jesus in the text claims to himself that appellation, and assumes the character, when he says, 'I am the light of the world; he that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.'

In discoursing from these words, we propose, through divine aid,

I. To illustrate the truth of this assertion, that

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Jesus is the light or source of knowledge and happiness.

II. To shew in what sense he is the light, or source of knowledge and happiness, to the world.

III. What is implied in following him, 'he that followeth me.'

Last of all, To state the connection which exists between following Jesus, and the enjoyment of all that knowledge necessary to eternal life.

I. We return to the first thing proposed, which was to illustrate the truth of this assertion, that Jesus is the light or source of knowledge and happiness.

1. This will appear, when we consider his qualifications, as to the manner and method of his teaching.

2. When we consider the superior excellency and importance of the doctrines he taught.

First, This will appear when we consider his qualifications, as to the manner and method of his teaching. Jesus had greatly the advantage of all other teachers, as he taught from conscious knowledge.—The wisest and best, in all ages of the world, have been so sensible of the imperfection of human reason, that we find them often wishing with eagerness for some divine teacher, who instead of the uncertain conjectures of human knowledge, might inform them of the truth, as it really existed in the mind of God.

Prejudices are so easily imbibed, and our tempers are so different at different times, that passion often baffles judgment, and caprice sits in the seat



of reason: the consequence of which is that the greatest philosophers, among the Heathens, were convinced that their senses were narrow, reason infirm, life short, and truth immersed in the deep: they taught their scholars in all things, that it was safest to suspend their assent, instead of pretending to certainty; to content themselves with opinion, grounded upon probability, as all that a rational mind had to acquiesce in.

But Christ was not taught after the manner of men; the Spirit was given him above measure, insomuch that the Jews marvelled, 'how knoweth this man letters, seeing he was never learned:' the solution is easy, 'my doctrine, says he, is not mine own, but his that sent me.' He generally introduces himself with the word *verity*, denoting the great importance, and necessity, as well as absolute certainty of what he said: it was not with Jesus as with the wise men of old; it was not opinion, but knowledge; it was not probability, but certainty; it was not reasoning, but intuition; as God is light, so was Christ; 'God manifest in the flesh.'—The Heathens were distracted by the multiplicity of opinions their masters entertained, even about the principal concerns of life; thus perplexed with doubts and difficulties, their scholars were ready to conclude, that there was either no truth in nature, or that it was beyond their reach. But, upon the other hand, Jesus steadily and uniformly taught the same sublime doctrines; his disciples saw the truth as it was in him, knew that they could not be deceived, wondered at the gracious words that proceeded

out of his mouth. What has been said, concerning Jesus speaking from conscious knowledge, is not to be understood as if the bare positive affirmation of any teacher was a sufficient ground for belief: this Jesus expressly disclaims, when he tells us, 'If he bore witness of himself, his witness was not true; but there is another that beareth witness of me, and I know that the witness that he witnesseth of me is true. For the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.'

The truth of this assertion will further appear, in the second place, when we consider that Jesus had sufficient power to convince the world that he was actually commissioned by his heavenly Father, to instruct the sons of men, and enlighten their minds: hence he produced the additional evidence of testimony in miracles and prophecies. The truths of the gospel of Jesus, being of a moral nature, cannot properly be supported by any foreign evidence, except that of testimony. All moral truths are probable, not certain: therefore the aid of testimony is brought in for their support, by which they, from being probable, become as certain, as if they were capable of the highest degree of mathematical demonstration. To reject therefore this sort of evidence, which alone they are capable of, is the height of folly and ingratitude; it is to reject what renders these facts from being probable, to become certain, and to demand what is impossible; which is as great madness, as if one should be displeased with his

structure, because he cannot perceive sounds with his eyes, or discern colours with his ears.

It is not intended at present, to enter into a detail of all the miracles our Saviour performed, or prophecies he uttered; only let it be observed, that whoever reflects upon them with attention and candour, must acknowledge that it will be hard to invent, or even to conceive a more easy, speedy, elegant, yet convincing method of instruction; our Saviour knew well that to minds little versed in speculation, speculation would not be intelligible; and that long deductions of reason, in proof of any doctrine, would never have the same effect as instructions, whereupon is stamped the authority of the great God. Our Saviour did not pretend to revelations which he never enjoyed; he bore his father's commission, which he made apparent on all reasonable occasions, and gave this undeniable proof of the reality of his pretensions, that none could do the works he did, unless God was with him; so that he could be no impostor.

But in the third place, the truth of this assertion will appear, when we consider that he knew what was in man: there is nothing that men study, or at least ought to study more, than the capacities, passions, prejudices, tempers and tastes of their audience, that they may suit their instructions to their capacities, conquer their prejudices, moderate their passions, rectify their lives, and reform their tastes; but these are earthly teachers, and speak of the earth; Jesus was from heaven, and above all; the one sees only the outward behaviour, and from that judges of the heart, these may

be, and often are, deceived; Jesus saw the heart, therefore could not be deceived; the superlative advantage of this wisdom of his needs only to be mentioned to shew its excellency. Had his disciples the common prejudices of the Jewish nation, it was well known to their master, who proportioned his instructions to their capacities and bearing. 'I have yet many things to say,' was his speech to them a little before his crucifixion, but you cannot bear them now; this divine knowledge of his led him to address them in such happy apologues, and fables, beautiful parables and allegories, as at once insinuated themselves gently, were remembered easily; contradicted their prejudices, without appearing to do so; instructed them without the imperious air of a master; corrected them without severity; and reproved them without insulting either their weakness or their sins: this is obvious to all who know the history of the evangelists; they must be lost to all taste, if strangers to its influence upon their minds.

Again, the truth of this assertion will appear, when we consider that his whole life, sufferings, and death were one uninterrupted evidence of the truth of his doctrine, and of the purity of his laws. *Example*, says the proverb, *is better than precept*; experience verifies this saying; we need only cast our eyes upon the world to see its daily force; we have only to turn them inward to see why it is so. Such is the imperfection of human understanding, that abstract, or general propositions, though ever so true, appear obscure or doubtful until explained by example; such is

the frail temper of our minds, that the wisest lessons, in favour of religion, go but a little way to convince the judgment, and determine the will, unless enforced by some other means; example has life, precept has not; precept often terrifies with seeming severity, example fires with emulation; precept appeals to the understanding, example wins passion to the side of judgment, makes the whole man of a piece. Many of the antient philosophers gave excellent rules, but could not practice them in life. Jesus practised the hardest of his own precepts, was himself what he taught the world to be; his life was a living transcript of his pure and perfect doctrines; his boldest enemies have never had the effrontery to contradict this evident fact.

But, in the second place, the truth of this assertion will further appear, when we consider the superior excellency and importance of the doctrines he taught.

In the first place, Jesus has brought life and immortality to light by his gospel. It was said by an Heathen emperor, that if he could persuade himself that there was no God, who made and governs the world, he would not live another day in it; he might have added, with the apostle, if there was not another state, beyond death and the grave; for then, of all men, the good and virtuous would be the most miserable. For though the displays of God's goodness, even in this state, are infinite; and the generality of mankind happy, far beyond their desert; yet their follies are so great, and the vices of men

so monstrous; the miseries of life so numerous, the pleasures of it so vain, that mankind would find but small encouragement to virtue, and, at most, act only so far conform to the rules of holiness, as they could do with safety to their interest and pleasure; and would, with the Epicurean, cry out, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die. But when we consider it in another light, as not our final state, but a state of trial and probation, for the exercise of all those graces and virtues, which we shall carry with us into another world; when, if we have acted our part well, we shall receive the most significant of all applauses; or, if otherwise, the most dreadful of all condemnations. Then it is, if we have any spark of ambition, we must be fired with the beauty of holiness, the pleasures and gain of godliness: See that the wisdom of fools is folly, leading to the gates of death.

That the Heathens were ignorant of this important article of religion, or that they were not so convinced of its reality, as could much influence their practice, is evident from their writings; the best and wisest of them entertained their thoughts upon this subject, with such diffidence, that they rather looked on it as greatly to be wished for than believed. To use their own language, it often happened to their minds, when prying into this matter, as it does to our eyes, when looking too intensely upon the bright sun, which dazzles them so as to make them give over looking at all. If it was so with the learned, what must it have been with the unlearned, who

lived without God in this world, or any expectation of futurity? Thanks, immortal thanks, to the heavenly Father, who, in Christ, has revealed to babes, what was hid from the wise, without the pains of search, or danger of mistake; we have not only the hopes, but certainty of happiness; we are not only believers in, but heirs of immortality.

The discoveries of this important truth by Jesus are more express and clear than those made to the Jews; as their laws were temporary, so were their sanctions; and though it may be alleged, that the Jews, in part, or faintly, believed in a future state; yet we may aver, they had not the same evidence whereupon to found their faith. Jesus came from that other world, could not be deceived in what he said of it; while he lived on earth, he raised the dead from their graves, rose himself by his own power, ascended to heaven from whence he came; here is a proof the most convincing we can have, until we ourselves enter upon that state, from whence there is no return.

But in the second place, the truth of this assertion will appear, when we consider the rejoicing discovery he has made of his Father's willingness to forgive all sorts of sins, to all sorts of sinners, upon their complying with the terms of the gospel; here neither the Heathen, or Jewish religion could give such satisfaction as might set the hearts of men fully at rest: God had concluded all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. The law required perfect obedience; what

Jew could fulfil the whole law? There was an ostentatious sect, who boasted of keeping the law, so as boldly to appeal unto the world. These proud Pharisees, did they not know that the blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sin. It was a more excellent service, than that of rites and ceremonies; a more precious blood, than that of bulls and goats, with which God can be pleased.

It has been alledged, that the natural notions we have of the mercy and goodness of Jehovah, would, of themselves, lead us to conclude, that God would forgive penitent reforming sinners. But if we reflect upon the natural consequences of vice, this alledgeance will have no solid foundation; for should it even be allowed, that God might pardon some less atrocious sins, yet there are others of such a deep dye, and their consequences so fatal, so permanent, that without some mediate interposition of the divine being, to prevent their consequence, they must in their own nature render men eternally miserable: yea, we even find that those foibles, that the world calls fallies of youth, and little imprudences, often have such consequences that all our future sorrow, all our future prudence, can never retrieve: Now, since God permits these things to take place in this world, what reason can we have to hope that God will interrupt the natural course of the consequence of vice in another world, especially in favours of those who have been violators and despisers of his laws? Say then that vain men did reform, that they spent the latter part of their

lives in virtue and holiness; yet who durst venture to affirm, that this again would reconcile, far less make atonement, for past and future faults: If we have a law within us that informs us that we are obliged to keep the laws of God; its language must be consistent, and tell us that we are to keep these laws at all times; this the best have not done; where then is their confidence placed? The natural attendants of guilt are fear and remorse; these cloud the mind, clip the wings of hope, harden into despair, and make us give up for lost, what was at best but doubtful. How comforting, therefore, must it be to hear our Saviour announcing, that his blood cleanseth from all sin!

This leads me to a third argument, which is the method of God's dispensing his pardoning mercy to the world; this, without doubt, is purely a matter of revelation, so great in itself, so big with happy consequences, so far above our comprehension; at the same time such an astonishing display of God's wisdom and goodness, holiness and justice, as should fill our mouths with that grateful exclamation, O the height, the depth, the breadth, and the length of the love of God in Christ, it passeth all understanding! Strange event! The Lord of glory died for men; do we consider his rank, he was God's equal; do we consider his power, by him the worlds were made; do we consider his riches, in him dwells all the treasures of the Godhead. Yet, extraordinary person as he was, he emptied himself of all these, became subject to death, that he might re-

concile us to God, satisfy justice, make us kings and priests in his Father's kingdom. Here is a truth the best suited to our present state of sin and weakness; withal, the most rejoicing we can conceive. Christ not only informs us of God's willingness to pardon sin; but that he himself came into this world to effect and accomplish this grand scheme, by his obedience and death, that we might be heirs of glory. Here is a scheme the best contrived to excite in us the most hearty sorrow for and hatred of sin: Here is a scheme that gives the noblest views of God's moral government over the world in righteousness: Here is a scheme, though to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness, yet found to be both the power and wisdom of God unto salvation. A truth, that it were bold to believe it, and think it true, if it were not far bolder to disbelieve, and call it in question.

The last thing I mention, for the truth of this assertion, is the promise of the holy Spirit, to assist our sincere, and co-operate with our honest endeavours after purity of heart, and holiness of life, the express conditions upon which we can show ourselves the disciples of Christ, and candidates for heaven. It is not in man to direct his own steps. The imperfection of our understanding is often so great that we are apt to mistake our duty; the corruption and perverseness of our hearts so desperate, that though we could see our duty, we will not practise it; temptations are so strong, our minds so weak, that we are in danger of being hurried away by them. All these

discouragements are provided against by no religion but that of the blessed Jesus, who promises, and readily affords, the aids of the holy Spirit.

The goodness of God to us in this respect, is illustrated by the feeble goodness of earthly parents to their children. Says our Saviour, 'If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give his holy Spirit to them that ask.' How desirable is this information? 'That he will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able; that his grace shall be sufficient for us, and his strength made perfect in our weakness.' Under the conviction of this truth, what temptation can overcome us? What sin defeat, or mar our breaking the force of evil habits, and confirming good ones, under the influence of our divine Teacher, the nature and tendency of whose doctrines, and lessons, give a manifest title to the assumed appellation in the text, that he is the light?

II. We proceed to the second thing proposed, which was to shew, that he is the light of the world, to Jews and Gentiles.

All nations of the earth, Jews as well as Gentiles, had long lain under a tedious night of darkness; what tended to dispel it a little, was their expectation of the Messias, styled the desire of all the world.—All these grand and beautiful descriptions with which the Old Testament abounds centre in Jesus. To give a description of the miserable state of the Jews, might perhaps not be so proper from this place; but whoever, with care

and attention, reads their history, as recorded by writers of their own nation, who will not be suspected of exaggeration, will find, that, on all occasions, they shewed themselves a stiff-necked and rebellious people, a generation of vipers. Our Saviour gives us a woful account of that corruption, and degeneracy, which prevailed among their rulers and chief men, as blind guides, groping in the dark; the consequence is plain and fatal, there can be no doubt but their law was pure and holy, every way adapted to their circumstances, and a proper school-master to bring them to Christ; but their doctors and rabbies had grossly perverted its pure and simple meaning, delivering for the oracles of God, the unmeaning traditions of men; instead of using their rites and ceremonies, in their original view, of being typical and figurative of inward purity and holiness, and of a better religion to come; they either considered them as God's best institution, and consequently never to be abrogated, or made them a cloak of licentiousness, regarding the regular performance of them as sufficient compensation for the want of inward purity. These abuses, in their worship, our Saviour corrects in his first public appearance, by exhibiting to their view the most ample, satisfying account of that true inward religion, alone acceptable to God.—Did the Pharisees pay tithes? &c. Jesus tells them, they omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith. Did they make clean the outside of the cup and platter? Jesus tells them, they were only like

whited sepulchres, beautiful without, within full of dead mens bones, and all uncleanness. Did the Jews maintain such a superstitious regard for the sabbath of the Lord, that they deemed it sinful on that day to perform even any act of charity? Jesus assures them, that mercy is better than sacrifice. That the Jews had lost all sense of the true nature of religion is evident from that blind zeal they had for the observation of useless rites, and unavailing ceremonies, contrary to the merciful design God had in view when he enjoined them; they flattered themselves with the hopes of justification by these; nay, after the conversion of many of them to Christianity, how eagerly did they insist on the conjunction of the Jewish rites, with the Christian terms of salvation? Thus ignorant were they of the true nature of God, and rational religion, in which our Saviour instructed them, for withdrawing their attentions from these beggarly elements, and rudiments of religion, that were only a shadow to the substance.

Again, our Saviour was the light of the Jews; as he explained more particularly, and ratified with more noble motives, and sanctions, the moral law of God, which they had a copy of, wrote by the finger of God himself, containing a summary of the duties they owe to God and man; yet they had found means to corrupt the worship of God, and free themselves from the duties of charity, judgment, and mercy, so fully enjoined by this law: These abuses Jesus corrects in his sermon upon the mount, and on many other occasions of his public ministry, making his explanati-

on of the moral law so far new, as it was enforced with the sublime stmotives, striking penalties, and noblest rewards.

Further, it is certain, from the whole history of the gospel, that our Saviour, by himself, or by his apostles, was the light of the Jews; in giving them more full discoveries concerning the constitution and policy of his kingdom. It is certain, from both sacred and profane history, that the Jews entertained the most strange, unwarrantable notions, as to the nature and design of Christ's kingdom, that can be conceived; far from imagining they had any occasion for such a thing as a spiritual kingdom to be erected among them; that they looked upon themselves as in the height of glory, in this respect, and wanted no more than a temporal prince, who should erect universal empire among them, free them from their Roman slavery, and make all nations tributary to them: This prejudice was so general, that we find it deeply rooted amongst the disciples themselves; nor did they get the better of it, till after his death and resurrection; then they began to see and feel the truth of what Jesus often had told them, that his kingdom was not of this world. In fine, all the types, ceremonies, and predictions recorded in the Old Testament, are so manifestly fulfilled in Jesus Christ, that by this circumstance, as their own law cannot fail, but was fulfilled by means of the exact accomplishment of every article in the character of Jesus; so also it is of more general extent, Christianity having reflected a lustre on their law, which it never could have without it;

hence the inference is plain and obvious, that Jesus is the light of the Jews.

But, in the second place, as he is the light of the Jews, so also of the Gentiles. To present before your eyes a just picture of the Heathen world, would appear naturally so ugly and deformed, that it might be suspected that we exceeded the life, did not their own historians draw their features so distorted, and their manners so ugly, that there is no danger, from any thing we can say, that it will be more frightful. One, however, would be willing to throw a shade over their monstrous vices, and rather say something in favour of human nature, did sacred truth admit of it; but this would only be a flattering representation, no true copy of the original. Christianity, barely represented to the eye, appears so lovely, that it needs no false colouring to set it off; no shades to heighten its beauty; no contrast to make its excellencies appear; it is like a diamond of the purest water, not needing the comparison of any useless vial, or less valuable gem, to brighten its lustre. What we shall observe with respect to the miserable state of the Heathens, shall neither be as if Christianity, in order to support its character as a religion, needed to be compared with other religions; nor with the malicious design of insulting over the ignorance and sinfulness of the Heathens; for this again would be glorying in the cross of Christ, in a sense quite averse to the disposition of him who was crucified; but solely with a view to awaken our gratitude to God, and our Saviour, for the

bright displays of his love and unmerited favours to us, that we may be animated and excited to a behaviour and conduct, in life, that corresponds with so much light and knowledge, that, as we differ in privileges, we may also excel in practice.

In the first place then, the Heathens had either lost the sense of, or grossly corrupted the worship of the one true and living God. Their notions of the Deity were most absurd and impious, altogether unworthy of the character of the Creator and Governor of the universe. The multiplicity again of their deities wholly distracted the minds of their worshippers. The history of the birth, life, actions, and even death of their gods are truly monstrous; as their gods were the greatest oppressors, or vilest miscreants, while on earth, poets, historians, represent them as patterns of all wickedness. No vice but had its patron among the gods. Things the most shameful were deified, altars erected, divine worship paid them. Their religion consisted of no rational articles of belief, or practice, but in a heap of ridiculous superstition, impious ceremonies and observations.

2dly, The manner of their worship corresponded with the nature of their gods, whom they thought could be appeased by nothing so well as the blood of human sacrifices, and those the most worthy and innocent. This of human sacrifice prevailed over the whole world, forbid by no religion, except that of the Jews. No wonder to find many of the Heathens imagining they did not need the assistance of such gods, to forward them

in virtue; nay to find the Stoics asserting, that they could equal, even exceed their gods in virtue; for what man, what devil, could exceed them in vice.

3dly, The Heathens had instituted among them a class of priests, not to instruct them in, and enforce the practice of virtue; but only to consult the flight of birds, the intrails of victims and sacrifices. Hence their cruelties in war, their oppressions in peace. These facts even in their politest nations, are too well known to be mentioned. Their poets and historians confirm the apostles account of them, Rom. i. 23. to the end, where we are taught that their morals were desperately corrupted, and was of a piece with their idolatrous views. This was a proper season for divine goodness to interpose, by his Son Jesus Christ, to extricate the world from this darkness, into the glorious and marvellous light of the gospel, which exhibits to us amiable and grand views of the divine Being, in his existence, perfections, and moral government; painting virtue in its native and intrinsic beauty, so as to attract regard; and vice, in all its ugliness and deformity. His instructions are plain and obvious to all, none are driven from him; high and low, rich and poor, are equally admitted, virtue and vice make the distinction. Hence Jesus is the light to both Jews and Gentiles.

III. We proceed now to the third thing proposed, which was to show, what is implied in following him, 'He that followeth me.' Following Jesus comprehends the whole of practical religion.

He himself was in every respect what he taught the world to be. He left us an example that we should follow his steps; Christians are required to have the same mind in them that was in Christ Jesus. This will display itself in fervent piety and devotion towards God; in manly fortitude, and unremitting zeal, for the honour of God's name, the purity of his laws and worship, perfect resignation and submission to the divine will.

Following Jesus comprehends irreproachable conduct towards men, in sincere love, and undisguised affection, sympathizing with their distress, administering comfort and consolation under melancholy; being candid and condescending to their weakness, perverseness, and prejudices; delicate, but faithful, in reproofs, when absolutely necessary.

Further, it implies meekness and gentleness to enemies, however unprovoked, and however great their indignities; though reviled we might not revile again; using penetration to prevent their designs, and caution to avoid their snares.

In fine, following Jesus, denotes humility, meekness, patience, forbearance, and forgiveness; delighting in doing good; having minds above the world; looking with disdain and contempt upon every thing that would draw us aside from these strong and sacred obligations we lye under to the love and service of God, that like Jesus we may be holy, harmless, and separate from sin. These are the great outlines that constitute the Christian character, and which shone with such re-

markable lustre in the life of Jesus. These we ought to transplant into our own souls, that we may resemble him as much as the present frail and imperfect state of our natures will admit, which constitutes that duty of following him.

IV. In the last place, we proceed, as was proposed, to state that connection which exists between following Jesus, and the enjoyment of all that knowledge necessary to eternal life. This will appear by reasoning from the cause to the effect.

It is an acknowledged maxim, that principles influence practice. Indeed it cannot be otherwise; for knowledge of any kind, or principles of any kind, seem to be without force until reduced to practice; practice constitutes their power and value; man was made for action, consequently principles lose all their worth, if they are not principles of action: the man who is endowed with good principles, and firmly believes the truths of revelation, promises fairer for happiness than the man that has wrong, or no principles at all. Besides, God who is a lover of righteousness, can make no man miserable who performs what is acceptable to him, in embracing and practising the truths of the gospel, as they are taught by Jesus Christ.

But in the second place, if we follow our divine master in practice, as well as in principle, we shall certainly acquire more knowledge, and that of the most important and interesting kind; for as principles influence practice, it is no less evident, that practice influences principle. It is

a sad but melancholy truth, that the original transgression of God's law introduced all the sin and misery, as well as ignorance, into the world, which the blessed Jesus came to remove. It is the nature of sin, some how, not only to spoil the heart, but also the head; so also the discharge of duty, as it reforms the heart, so it informs the understanding, inspires with a love to know his duty better; his search will be diligent, his regard to virtue great and sincere; no prejudices that darken the minds of others can obstruct his light. Thus principle and example mutually operate upon one another; so as they who are possessed of them shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

But in the last place, upon this part of the subject, the assurance of divine aid is one of the most encouraging doctrines of Christianity, to animate us in duty, especially when Christ also says, I am the way, the truth and the life; with what has been said, the promises and appointment of God make the connection evident and satisfying; whosoever believeth on him shall not perish but have everlasting life. He that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father: I will love him and manifest myself to him. Again, if a man love me, and keep my words, my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. In this sense Jesus, in a peculiar manner, is the light of the world; for by this divine illumination he has promised to give us, by this communion he maintains with us, we can harbour no fear that those who follow him, shall walk in dark-

ness, or fall short of eternal life; because the principles of religion of themselves are so enlightning, the obeying his laws so influencing, the promises of his maintaining communion and fellowship with us, so animating and enlivening, and each of these particulars so well adapted to free us from darkness and ignorance, that as he who travels in the day time, whilst the sun shines bright over his head, cannot easily err, but may see, both whither and which way he goes: so whoever believes and follows the doctrines of Jesus, cannot remain even, in the nature of things, under any great mistake or uncertainty, concerning the way to salvation; or be deficient in that knowledge necessary to eternal life and happiness, which is, and ought to be, the ultimate aim of human actions and life.

Having finished the method proposed, I shall, as usual on similar occasions, offer, to my Reverend Fathers and Brethren, a few motives and arguments to excite and animate us, to let our light so shine, that others seeing our good works, they may serve the Lord.

The first motive I mention is the honour and dignity of this our office, which consists in publishing the same message, and glad tidings of salvation, that Jesus published from the highest authority, Matth. xxviii. 19. ‘Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost:’ John xx. 21, 22. ‘Then said Jesus to them again, peace be unto you; as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And

‘ when he had said this, he breathed on them, and
 ‘ faith unto them, receive ye the holy Ghost.’
 2 Cor. v. 20. ‘ Now then we are ambassadors for
 ‘ Christ, as though God did beseech you by us;
 ‘ we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled
 ‘ to God.’

2d Motive, Consider the worth and excellency
 of the soul; its redemption is precious, the whole
 world in balance with it, is of no value, ‘ what
 ‘ will it profit a man, if he should gain the whole
 ‘ world, and lose his own soul; or what will a man
 ‘ give in exchange for his soul.’

3d Motive, Consider that direful doom and
 sentence which awaits the useless and unprofitable
 servant, Ezek. xxxiii. 7, 8. ‘ So thou, O son of
 ‘ man, I have set thee a watchman unto the
 ‘ house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the
 ‘ word at my mouth, and warn them from me.
 ‘ When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man,
 ‘ thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to
 ‘ warn the wicked from his way, that wicked
 ‘ man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will
 ‘ I require at thine hand.

Last of all, Often reflect upon, and consider,
 that significant applause and grand reward, that
 God will bestow upon the faithful servant. If
 thou warn the wicked of his way, to turn from
 it, if he does not turn from his way, he shall die
 in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul.
 ‘ These that turn many to righteousness, shall shine
 as the sun in the firmament in the kingdom of the
 Father. Converts shall be to them for a crown of
 joy and rejoicing in the day of the Lord.

I shall now take my leave of this subject, by prescribing a few rules and directions to my respectable audience, as to the manner they should receive the light and hear instructions.

First of all, It should be with diligence and attention. Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is. When assembled, he that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

2dly, You ought to receive instructions with candor and integrity; divested of all partiality and prejudice, receive the truth in the love of the truth, and as it is revealed in Jesus Christ.

3dly, You ought to hear with moderation and meekness, as new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.

Again, Receive instructions with a view to practise them; be not only hearers, but doers of the will of God; if ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

Last of all, Ye ought to hear, in the exercise of frequent, fervent and serious prayer to God for his blessing, that alone makes rich; for Paul may plant, Apollo may water, but God alone giveth the increase.

May God of his infinite mercy, and for some good purpose, bless what has been said; and to his name be the praise and glory, now and ever. Amen.

THE END OF THE SERMON.

EXHORTATION

AT

VISITING OF FAMILIES.

THE intention and design of visiting families in this manner, is to put them in mind of the great importance of religion, and of that interest and concern every one of us has in it. Our attention to religion constitutes the care we take of our precious and immortal souls; this makes it the one thing needful, as it secures the better part.

Since religion is of such moment and consequence unto us, it is natural and reasonable to expect that God, in his goodness, would make us acquainted with the duties of it, some how or other. This he has been pleased to do these three ways.

First, We may know something of religion, by attending carefully to the works of creation. The volume of nature lies open before every one of us, we should read from it as the Psalmist did; the heavens declare thy glory, the firmament shews thy handy-work. The apostle reasons to the same purpose, when he tells us, that the invisible things of God, even his eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen by the things he hath made.

But then, in the second place, we may know a little of religion, by attending carefully to what

passes in our mind, where God has planted the conscience, a substitute and vicegerent of his, which never fails to approve of us when we do right, and condemn us when we do wrong; this is confirmed by the experience of those who attend to what passes in their minds. Suppose we are meditating, or doing evil, in the most secret and clandestine manner, when no eye of the world sees us; does not conscience check and condemn us? And if we meditate, or do good; if the world see and condemn us, our own conscience approves us. What can this be, but the voice of God, that candle of the Lord, that is lighted in the breast of every one of us. Hence the apostle tells us, that the Gentiles, which have not a law, that is a revealed law, they are a law unto themselves; that is, have some sense of religion imprest upon their minds; and he addeth, in the mean while, their consciences either accusing, or else excusing them. It is allowed by Christians, of all denominations, to be a great part of duty, to keep consciences void of offence, both towards God and towards man.

But then, in the third and last place, we were not sufficiently taught religion, either by what we saw in the world without us, or by what we felt in our own minds; therefore it pleased God the Father, to give us a clear and perfect discovery of all the duties of religion by Jesus Christ his own Son, who has opened to us the whole council of peace, the terms of reconciliation, and the conditions of our acceptance, in such plain and legible characters, that the way-faring man may know it, he that runs may read. We are now

without excuse, if we do not know our duty; yea if we do not practise it. What our Saviour of old applied to the Jews, with equal propriety, will apply to us, If I had not come to the world, ye would have had no sin; but now you have no cloak or excuse for your sin; this, even this, will be our condemnation, that so much light has come into the world, and we love darkness rather than light. Jesus Christ, the author of our religion, and the finisher of our faith, has instituted various means to impress a sense of duty on the mind. All of us have the scriptures, the word of God, in our hand, which we should search with care and diligence; for in them we have the words of eternal life; they are they which testify to us concerning Jesus Christ, what he has done, taught, and suffered on our account; what he requires us to do as men and Christians.

Besides, the return of every sabbath invites all to go up into the house of God, and worship in his sanctuary; to hear the message his servants have to deliver, and receive the sacraments, these seals of God's covenant. It may not be in the power of every person in this family to attend upon public instruction; such as can, I hope, will make conscience of doing it; and such as are necessarily detained at home, I would put them in mind that it is their duty to remember the sabbath-day, to keep it holy; this is a day set apart for meditating on spiritual, heavenly, and divine subjects. Much of it ought to be spent in reading the scriptures, and other pious and devout books, meditating upon what is read, and being

much in prayer to God, for a blessing upon the public and private exercises of devotion.

Besides, it is an excellent mean for our improvement in religion, that families keep up the worship of God decently and regularly in their houses; this is that evening and morning sacrifice with which God is well pleased, and extremely delighted with; to live in the neglect of it there is great hazard and danger; for the Lord has told us, by the prophet, that he will pour out his fury on the Heathen, and on the families that call not on his name. Now it must be a fearful thing to fall into the hands of an angry and offended God.

When I am upon that article of recommending family worship, I would recommend it to families to worship God with New Testament, as well as Old Testament psalms, a collection of which you have recommended by several assemblies. I know it is very difficult, and even offensive to introduce any thing new into the method of worship; but I would ask Christians, if worship be conducted with us in so pure and perfect a manner, as that it can admit of no reformation? I believe no Christian will say, this is the case. Why then, since it admits of reformation, but that we reform?

I would have Christians to ask the following questions, and answer them with a single eye to the glory of God, and the good of their own souls.

First, Ask this question, Do our teachers recommend to us a New Testament psalmody, if

we obey the recommendation, will it be a great sin to us, and aggravate our punishment, in the day of the Lord? If it increase your guilt, and aggravate your punishment, you are not to obey the recommendation; but if it has a contrary effect, why but you obey?

2dly, Ask yourselves this question, Do our teachers recommend a New Testament psalmody, if we reject, refuse, and even despise it, will this be a great duty to us and recommend us to the divine favour at the day of judgment? If it be a great duty, and recommend us to the divine favour, we may reject, refuse, and even despise it; but if it does not, I hope we will be cautious, and circumspect in our conduct.

3dly, Ask this question, Are we true and real Christians, indeed, the friends of Christ? (I do not mean nominal or professing Christians; there is a wide difference between nominal and real Christians,) If we can honestly say, that we are real Christians, the point is gained; all his true friends will rejoice to praise him in New Testament psalms, where he is the constant theme and subject, not in distant types and shadows, but in fact and reality.

Last of all, Christians may ask themselves this question, With what temper of mind, and disposition of soul, do we sing the psalms of David? I presume we need not inform Christians, that unless they sing the psalms of David with grace and melody in their hearts, they sing them to no purpose; if we can say that we sing them with grace and melody, the end is obtained; for all those

who, with proper temper, can praise a coming Saviour, with the same temper will praise a come Saviour, who has accomplished the grand scheme of redemption.

Now, to return to the exhortation, after we have thus worshipped God in our families, every one of us ought to retire and worship God by ourselves, thanking him for former kindness, imploring divine pardon for past offences, and recommending ourselves to the care and protection of God, in the future part of life.

I would observe to parents, who are blest with children, that it is their duty to be very tender and circumspect in their life and conversation; children are so many souls, the charge of which are committed to their parents. Now we read from scripture, that if parents do not provide for their children, even the temporal, the perishing enjoyments of the world, it is said of them, that they have denied the faith, and are worse than infidels. But if parents provide not for their children spiritual provision, that bread of life that cometh from above, and nourisheth up to everlasting life, they are guilty of a worse crime, and liable to a far severer censure. Get for yourselves and children understanding and religion; for that is the principal thing.

It is the duty of all children to love, obey, and reverence their parents; remembering God their Creator, in the days of their youth, before that the evil time come upon them, and the years in which they must say, that they can find no pleasure. They have this for their encouragement,

if they serve God when they are young, when they come to be old, he will not leave nor forsake them.

It is the duty of all servants, in every family, to be faithful to that trust that is committed to them; they should serve, not with eye-service, but with singleness of heart, adorning the doctrine of God, and of Christ the Saviour. Could we persuade masters and servants, to be truly good and religious, it would be an easy matter to prevail upon each of them to the proper discharge of the several duties they owe, in the several relations in which they are placed. Aged persons should be no longer slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; redeeming the time, because the days are evil; and as their merciful visitation will not always last, the past part of their lives should be more than sufficient for them to have wrought the will of the flesh; henceforth they ought to mention his righteousness alone.

Widows have their consolations from the promises of God, which are faithful, and may be depended upon. He has said, he will be a husband to the widow, and a father to her fatherless children, (that is, in the room and place of all relations) if they act a close and needy dependence upon him; none that ever trusted in him were ever put to shame. Every page of scripture authorizes us to assure the righteous, that it will ever be well with them; but wo to the wicked, it will be ill with them. This should engage you to study the character of the righteous and upright, and to a-

void the paths of vice and sin, that we may perfect holiness in the fear of God; living the life of the righteous, and then our latter end will be like his, in full and abundant peace.

Certainly it is the duty, and ought to be the practice, of the ministers in this parish, to pray for the temporal and spiritual prosperity of this people; but you must also know, that it is your duty to pray for your ministers, that they may be blessed, directed, and accepted of God; if we are mutually employed at a throne of grace, for one another, we shall be mutual comforts to one another, and the pleasure of the Lord will prosper in our hands. Finally, brethren, pray for us.

An EXPLANATION of the Nature, End, and Design of the Sacrament of our LORD's SUPPER, with a short account of the necessary Qualifications for a right Participation of the same.

THE motive which ought to influence Christians to engage in this service, is the last and dying command of our Saviour; 'Do this 'in remembrance of me.'

We ordinarily pay some little regard to the last advices and dying instructions of our friends; but we should pay the highest regard to the last advice and dying instructions of Jesus Christ, that friend and lover of our souls even unto death.

You all know that the sacraments of the New Testament are baptism and the Lord's supper, which are one in their nature and essence, as they both bind us, in the strongest manner, to the love and service of God; but they differ in these circumstances, baptism is to be administered but once to the same person; the Lord's supper frequently. Baptism is to be administered to children; 'The infants of such as are members of 'the visible church are to be baptised,' the Lord's supper only to persons of years and understanding, 'but let a man examine himself, and so let 'him eat.' Once more, they differ in their external signs; water in baptism, bread and wine in the Lord's supper, both which signs point out to us one and the same thing, the efficacy of Christ's blood and atonement; by which we are to un-

derstand, not merely the last and suffering scenes, but all that he did and taught as well as suffered for men.

Q. *What is the Lord's Supper?*

A. "The *Lord's Supper* is a sacrament, wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine according to Christ's appointment, his death is shewed forth; and the worthy receivers, are not after a corporal and carnal manner, but by faith, made partakers of his body and blood, with all his benefits, to their spiritual nourishment, and growth in grace."

The idea of a sacrament to a young mind should be, that it is a holy oath, by which we bind ourselves to the love and service of God. It may be worthy of observation, as the word sacrament is not to be found in the Bible, how it came to be introduced among Christians. It was borrowed from the Romans, who were great warriors; when a captain lifted a soldier he gave him an oath (*sacramentum*) by which he swore that he would follow his captain where-ever he led him. So, by sitting down at the table of the Lord, we acknowledge Jesus as the captain of our salvation, and swear that we will follow him through good and bad report. Hence we learn that primitive Christians did not scruple to receive instruction even from the Heathens.

The first thing in the question is the sacramental actions, the action is plain and simple; *giving and receiving*. Then follow the signs, what we give and receive, *bread and wine*. The propriety and significancy of these signs are obvious, bread

and wine is the food of the body; we must eat and drink often to support life; so the doctrine, precepts, and example of Christ are the food of the soul, which should be often applied unto. Again, We have the Author and Institutor of this ordinance, *according to Christ's appointment*; it is founded upon the highest authority; it is no institution of man's, no invention of the clergy's; it is Christ's own appointment. The end and design of the institution, was to shew forth his death, whereby *his death is shewed forth*. Whatever generous and unmerited love the Saviour has manifested to men, so unmindful, so ungrateful were men, that long ere now we had forgot his disinterested friendship; but, had we no other evidence, we can trace this memorial from this moment to that very night in which he was betrayed.

The manner of receiving, which is *not after a corporal and carnal manner, but by faith*; in which we look beyond the bread and wine, the natural supports of the body, to the appearance and doctrine of Christ as the food of the soul. Transubstantiation is refuted by this; if the bread is turned to flesh, and the wine into blood, we need no faith, as seeing, feeling, and tasting determines which is which.

The privileges, *all his benefits*; however great and numerous these are, they may be comprehended in the following; first, the pardon of sin, 'in him we have redemption, even the remission of sins. Be it known unto you, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.'

2dly, The holy Spirit to subdue sin; ' If I go not, ' the Comforter will not come; but if I go, I will ' send the Comforter, he will lead and guide you ' in all truth.' Last of all, Eternal life, ' this is ' the gift of God, as many as believe on his ' name shall not perish, but shall have eternal ' life.'

All these privileges are for our *spiritual nourishment and growth in grace*. We are not, after communicating, to imagine that we are finished Christians; our path must not only resemble, but be exactly that of the just, ' that shineth more ' and more until the perfect day.'

Q. What is required to the worthy receiving of the Lord's Supper?

A. " It is required of them, that would worthily partake of the Lord's Supper, that they " examine themselves of their knowledge to discern the Lord's body, of their faith to feed upon him, of their repentance, love and new obedience; lest coming unworthily, they eat and " drink judgment to themselves."

This question points out to communicants in general what is their duty, self-examination, as to the temper of their minds, and conduct of their lives. In the discharge of this duty they should be strict, accurate, and impartial.

It likewise points out or directs to several subjects upon which we ought to examine ourselves; *knowledge to discern the Lord's body*, which we have got from the education of our parents and teachers, from the Bible and other pious books.

Faith to feed upon him; if we believe him

to be the sent of God, the true Meffias, the Son of God, and Saviour of the world, a Prophet to teach, a Priest to atone, a King to rule in and over us.

Repentance consists in a change of mind from what is ill to what is good, turning from Satan to the living and true God; it implies sorrow for sin, resolutions of amendment; but sorrow for sin, and resolutions of amendment, are not the whole of repentance; we may be sorry for sin, resolve to amend, after all never amend. The material part of repentance, consists in putting our resolutions into practice, in the actual amendment and real reformation of our lives.

Love to Christ, 'whom having not seen we love.' Christians, who are well disposed, think it difficult, if not impossible, to know when they love Christ: our Saviour removes this mystery, by these plain and simple marks, 'If ye love me, keep my commandments,' viz. sitting at his table. When we neglect his commandments, it is no evidence of loving him; our sincerity in obedience is the most satisfying evidence of it. Again, if we have *love* to one another; 'Hereby shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another. If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remembrest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.'

New obedience; every communicant, upon a strict and impartial inquiry into their past con-

duct, will find good reason to form the strongest resolutions to live more to the praise and glory of God in after life. These resolutions must not be framed in our own name and strength; but in the name and strength of the Redeemer; 'though weak of ourselves, we can do all through Christ strengthening us; our sufficiency is of God.'

From the last part of the question we learn, that there is great hazard and danger in coming to this sacred service, without examining ourselves upon these subjects: By pretensions of love and regard to God and the Saviour, we may impose upon the world, we may deceive ourselves; but we cannot impose upon God, who searches the hearts, and tries the reins of men, who will see through the mask, and be so far from approving, that he will judge and condemn all hypocrites; which should make us honest and sincere in our endeavours to love and serve God.

It is presumed that all communicants make conscience of secret prayer to God, that they will retire from the world, and, in private, devote their souls and their bodies to the service of God; resolving whatever others do, for them, and as far as their interest will go, they shall serve God, making mention of his righteousness alone; if we are honest and sincere, we will meet with all encouragement from God, who assures us, that all who come to him, through Christ, he will in no wise cast out. Let this be the language of our souls, even so we come, Lord Jesus.

F I N I S.



